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CORPS SUPPORT COMMAND SOLDIERS HONOR FALLEN OF WORLD WAR I

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BONY, France – As they stood at silent attention in the Somme American Cemetery here, rain pouring down their stolid faces, the somber atmosphere reflected in the Soldiers' eyes.

The troops, from the 181st Transportation Battalion's 51st, 515th, 377th and Headquarters Companies, came here May 30 to take part in a Memorial Day ceremony honoring American Soldiers who fought and died in "the war to end all wars."



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In the Somme American Cemetery in Bony, France, 1st Lt. Julie Stock (second from left), platoon leader for the 51st Transportation Company of V Corps' 3rd Corps Support Command, leads the Soldiers of the 181st Transportation Battalion's honor platoon during a Memorial Day ceremony honoring the Soldiers of World War I.

The cemetery is the final resting place of

1,833 Soldiers from World War I,

including three Medal of Honor winners. Today it lies in the midst of French fields green with life, but in 1918 this was a corridor of destruction and trenches called the Hindenburg Line.

The Line was a 1,000-yard wide strip of barbed wire, trenches, mines, rolling hills and underground passages where the sometimes hidden German army was firmly dug in.

The American 27th and 30th Divisions broke the formidable Line in September 1918 despite suffering the U.S. Army's largest losses in a single day.

The Soldiers heard the story of the Line from Robert Bell, director of the cemetery. The troops, from the 16th Corps Support Group of V Corps' 3rd Corps Support Command, volunteered to come honor those who fell here.

Sgt. Maj. Ricky Driskell of Headquarters and Headquarters Company brought his troops here and solidified the significance of Memorial Day in their hearts and minds by telling them how one in 19 Soldiers who fought to liberate the region in World War I died in battle.



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A color guard from the 181st Transportation Battalion of V Corps' 3rd Corps Support Command marches in the Memorial Day ceremony at the Somme American Cemetery in Bony, France.

Some of those troops already had a connection with those at rest here, and had earned battle honors of their own. One is combat veteran Spc. Tina Jones of the 515th Transportation Company, who laid a wreath here in honor of the dead. While supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, Jones was driving in a convoy headed toward Baghdad International Airport when her truck hit an improvised explosive device. Her uniform pants caught fire. The flames then spread to her blouse, but she kept driving. She said she was saved by her Kevlar helmet, which stopped the fire from spreading. She continued to drive until

her convoy found a safe location and combat medics arrived. Jones earned a Purple Heart, and she says her experience taught her the true meaning of Memorial Day.

"Any Soldier always respects those who came before. In World War I, these Soldiers were fighting for liberty and freedom. They deserve this honor and we can never thank them enough," said 1st Lt. Julie Stock, platoon leader for the 1st platoon of the 51st Transportation Company. Stock served as the officer in charge of the honor platoon that came here for Memorial Day.

Residents of the towns of Bony and St. Quentin, devastated because they were in the middle of the Hindenburg Line, welcomed the Soldiers of the 181st and showed them they haven't forgotten the sacrifice American Soldiers made here for their freedom. Many French veterans of World War II also paid their respects by participating in the ceremony. All treated the American troops as friends and comrades, trading stories, medals, ribbons and family histories as brethren and carriers of the noble tradition of honoring those who gave their lives for freedom.

